

Hampton Sketches

A Change of Base

E. L. Chichester

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THIS SKETCH HAS APPEARED IN
THE "CHRISTIAN INTELLIGENCER"
AND THE 'SOUTHERN WORKMAN'

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A CHANGE OF BASE

BY EDWARD L. CHICHESTER

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IT is hard to define just what it was that attracted me to Peters. He was tall and black, with those long hands and feet and the thin calves one sees in the photographs of African savages. These characteristics came out strongly on the ball field at Hampton, where I first caught sight of him. His fingers seemed to rake the sky when the ball came in his direction, and the way he doubled and twisted himself in pitching, or stealing a base, made us laugh.

But with these "shines on the ball field" the trifling and comic in Peters came to an end. The real man was dignified. Back of the black mask was a reticent soul, and as you looked into his searching eyes you felt the presence of a self-contained, self-controlled nature. He rarely smiled, and when he did the sudden gleam of white teeth expressed no abandonment of mirth but only a passing sense of the humorous that would scarcely have been noticed if his face had been a white one and the contrast between teeth and skin less marked.

You felt that the boy had had an experience. He had made some kind of a fight. He had learned something in the school of life, and grown restrained and wary as we all do after we have measured our wills with circumstances, and realized that every victory is dearly bought and far from complete.

Peters' story was a common one, hardly worth telling from the standpoint of events. He was brought up in New York on the upper west side, one of the 65,000 Negroes whose presence in the city is giving the metropolis its tangible Negro problem. I don't know much about his people. His mother probably worked, as so many Negro wives and mothers do in the Northern cities, while their men folk, and especially their growing sons, trifle.

Added to the inconsequential ways of youth, making it hard to settle down to anything with steadiness and persistence, the Negro boy faces the fact that white folks, the folks who monopolize the wealth and learning of the society in which he finds himself, do not expect very much of him, and worse than this, that race feeling has closed most

of the doors to preferment and advancement to the man with a black skin. Peters fell into the ways of others of his class. He was idle and purposeless except that he got all the fun he could, and his cool, self-controlled spirit, combined with a body made of steel springs, soon made him a star among the local ball players. The sports, both white and black, delighted in such a youth, and Peters gained in reputation and grew satisfied with his attainments and prospects.

The boy's mother knew that something was wrong. She lamented the fact that her child had grown beyond her control, and dreaded a catastrophe that she felt sure must lie at the end of the road he was following. In some way she was able to get him packed off to Virginia and entered at Hampton before he had broken with decent living. He did not come as an incorrigible; Hampton is not a reform school. But all the strength of his nature, and it was a strong one, was devoted to sports, and the career that appealed to him was the short-lived one of the popular idol. How the rooters of the upper west side

used to yell when he came to the bat! This was music that made his blood leap. A school with its regular hours, requirements of close application, uninteresting studies. *School!* the very thought of it was stifling.

Peters began by falling in line with the routine of the place. The military part of it pleased him, and the manual training furnished an outlet for his energies. Then came the inevitable letting up in attention as the work lost the charm of novelty.

He was in the pink of condition physically; regular hours for sleep and exercise, and good food had done their work. Then it was that the pull of the habits of the years spent about town made itself felt.

I don't know what it was that Peters did, perhaps he indulged in a surreptitious smoke, or visited Hampton town out of hours and without permission; at any rate he was summoned to the office to give an account of himself, and this summons was not from a white man but from a man of his own color. Peters had that in him which makes the black man submit to the white man without a

sacrifice of dignity, but to be called to account by a black man!—well, we shall see.

He entered the office *game*. His sporting life had fitted him for just this sort of encounter. That big Negro behind the desk should learn at once that Peters was no cringing school boy, and he did. The vocabulary of the New York street urchin is rich in invective, and Peters proved that his tongue shared the suppleness of his other members. As he poured out his stream of scorn and indignation, a great black hand appeared before his face and the voice of the Commandant's assistant, for it was he, remarked in the quietest tone possible :

"That'll do, Peters, you are in no condition to talk; go to your room and see me to-morrow at this time," and the hand motioned him off, while the Captain, as he was called, turned to speak with someone else.

It was humiliating to have his attack treated in this way, but Peters had said his say, and he withdrew to tell the fellows outside that he had told the Captain what he thought of him. Here

he met with disappointment. No one seemed to think that he had done anything to be proud of. One youth, franker than the others, plainly told him that he was a fool and the Captain was the best friend he had.

All day Peters went about his work suffering from wounded pride, and going through that painful process of readjusting his view of life and of himself with which we are all familiar.

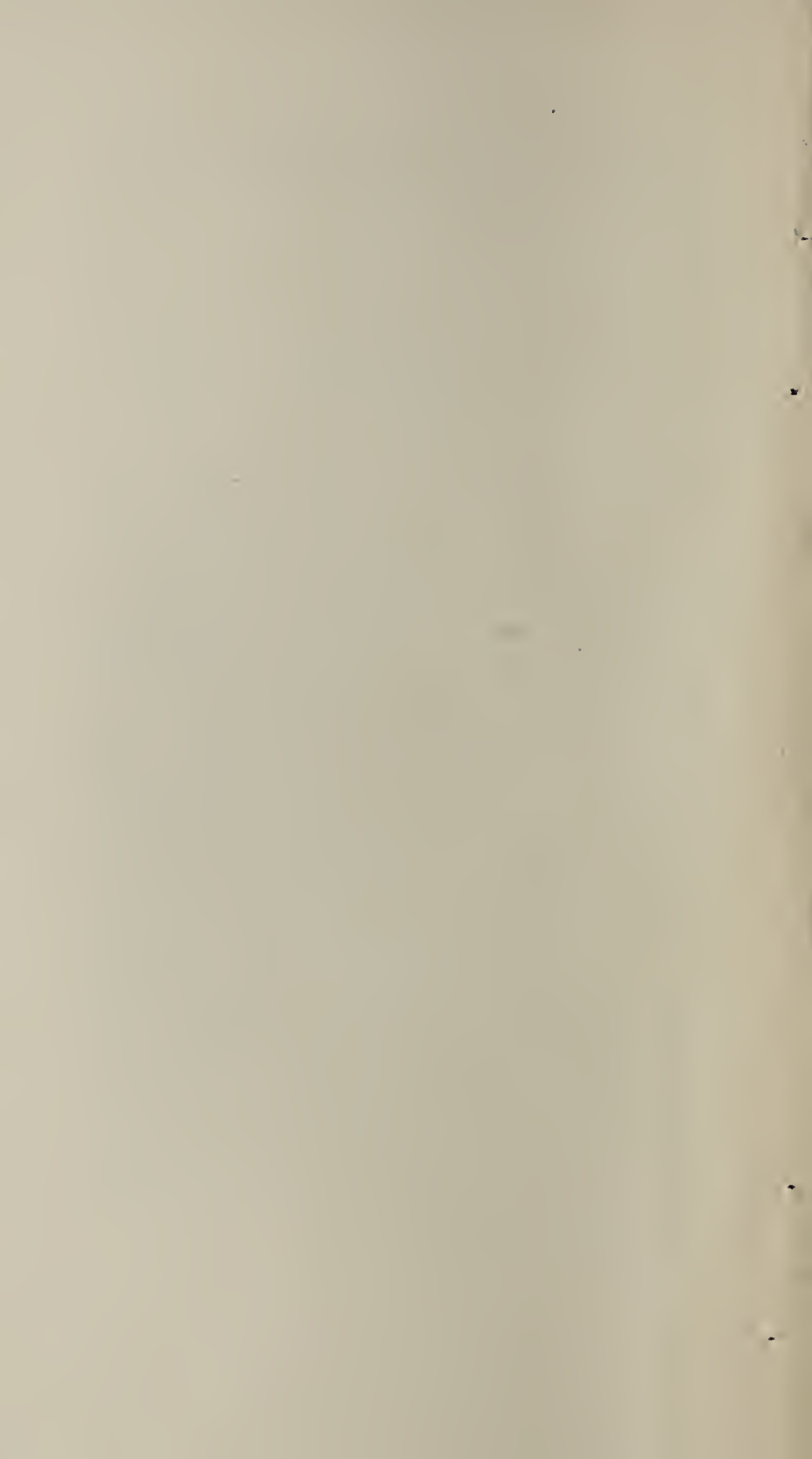
He was entertaining serious doubts as to whether Peters was the truly great and wise personage he had supposed him to be, and the next day he reported at the appointed hour with all his wrath replaced by a strange feeling of doubt and uncertainty.

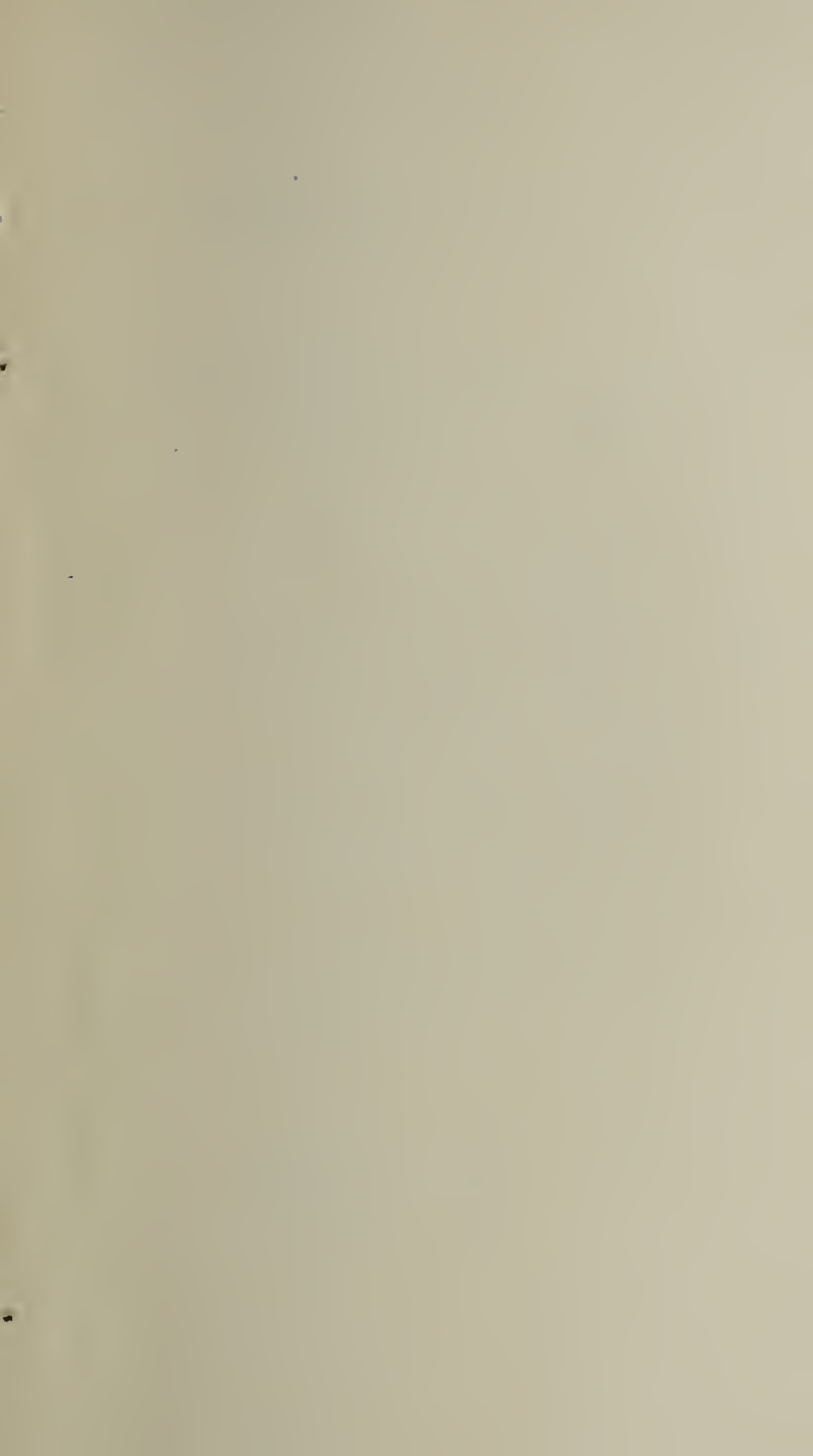
He stood before the Captain. They looked at each other a moment, and then Peters cried. This rest was simple enough. The Captain talked to him like a father, and the boy went back to his work with a new idea of what Hampton meant, and a glimpse of something, a purpose, an ideal in life, different from anything he had ever known before.

"You see," said the Captain, in speak-

ing of it afterwards, "the boy really thought that he had been imposed upon. He was grossly ignorant, of course, but he wasn't afraid. Such a boy is worth saving." And he was. The energy, the ambition, the splendid physical suppleness, and perfect alignment of all his faculties, were turned into new channels.

He played ball. When the "help" from the Hotel Chamberlin, numbering some of the Cuban Giants on its force, visited the school, we looked to Peters to preserve our laurels. But if you wanted to see the real Peters in action you should visit the Trade School and note his absorbed interest in his work, and then study the articles turned out by his skilled hand. He is going back to New York where he is *wanted* by one of the big manufacturers. Prizes in the field of productive work lure him now, a sober sense of his place in society, and of the opportunities to help his people into lives of usefulness and power, has taken possession of him. And there is a black mother whose anxiety has given place to joy and pride in her son, too deep and real for utterance.







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Johnson of Hampton

E. L. Chichester

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THIS SKETCH HAS APPEARED
IN THE "UTICA PRESS," THE
"BOSTON TRANSCRIPT," THE
"YOUTH'S COMPANION," AND
THE "SOUTHERN WORKMAN."

JOHNSON OF HAMPTON

BY EDWARD L. CHICHESTER

Assistant Chaplain at Hampton Institute

IN order to give some idea of the work done at Hampton Institute, it is customary to refer to the school's record and point to the fact that 36 educational leaders (a list headed by the name of Booker T. Washington) have gone out from Hampton; that the school has sent out 2092 tradesmen and farmers; that 1618 of its girls are homekeepers, and so on, with a long list of telling figures, but to give an idea of the peculiar quality of its work is not so easy. This work is unobtrusive in the doing and its most significant results do not lend themselves readily to analysis or tabulation.

About four years ago I was going through the dairy and saw a tall, awkward looking Negro washing milk cans. I asked his name. "Johnson." I asked him where he was from, and straightening himself up, he looked at me in a bewildered way and answered, "Alabama."

"What did you do at home?"

"I worked with my father on the farm."

"Did your father own his place?"

"No, he didn't own anything, but," brightening up, "he's made the first payment on a home since I came here to school."

The boy's influence had told. Hope and ambition had come to that black laborer down at Alabama because his son had sent in a report of a new and broader outlook for his people. A year or two after this I was in the Grand Central Station in New York, and saw this same youth clutching his baggage and looking about him in a bewildered way. A man he had expected to meet, who would take him across the city, was not on hand.

"How did you happen to be in New York?" I asked.

He told me that he had been working through the summer with a dairy farmer in Connecticut, and was on his way to Hampton.

"Did you like the work?"

"Yes, and he wants me to come back next year."

Progress again. This boy was desired. Slow, unpolished, unprepossessing, if you will, but desired where he had worked. Some progress was being made

here toward the solution of the Negro problem.

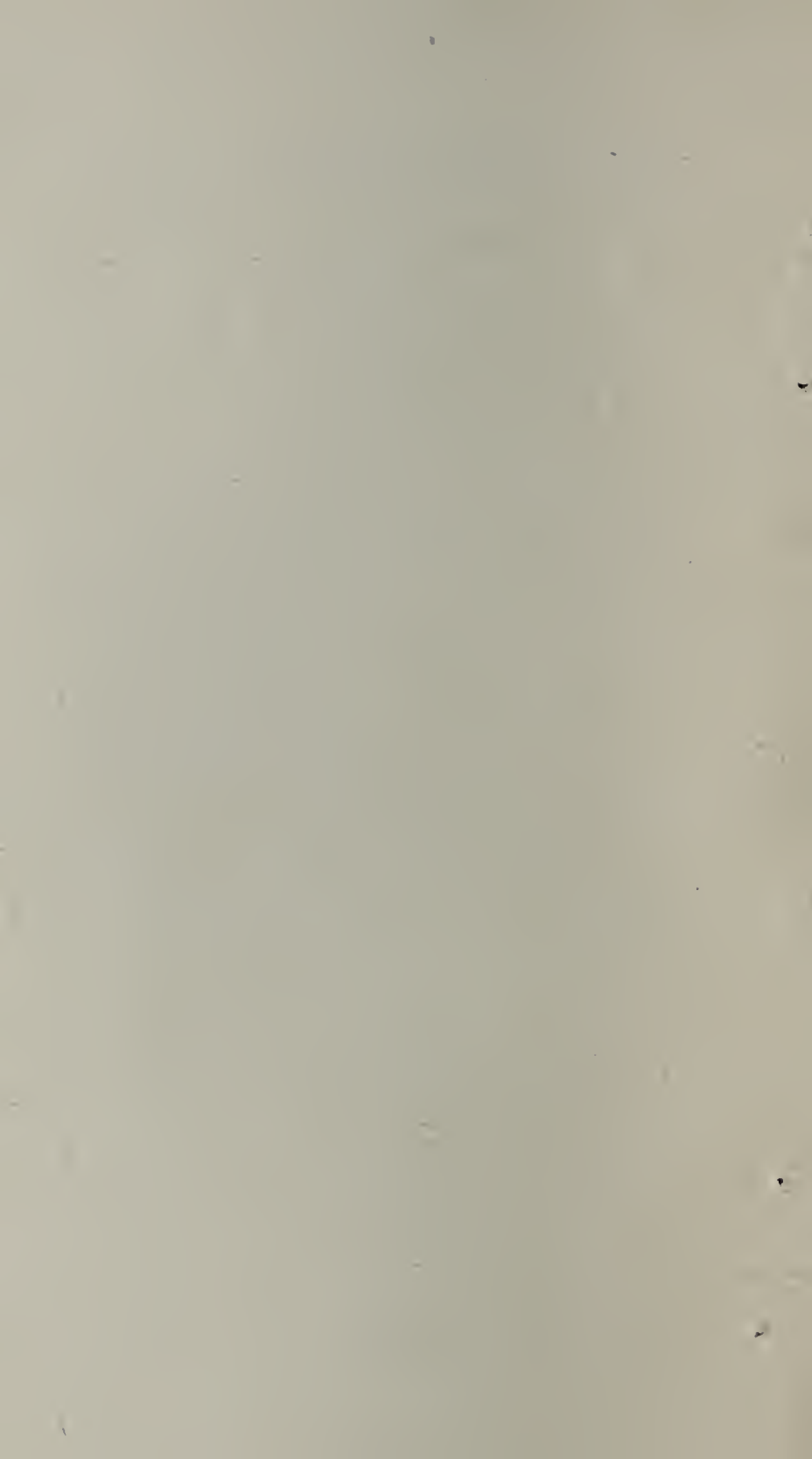
Last summer I saw him again. He was on the grounds at Hampton, wearing a uniform with stripes betokening official rank. His carriage was erect and soldierly. He was still slow and deliberate in speech and movement, but his eye was clear, and he looked at you when he spoke. We shook hands cordially and I asked him what he was doing now.

"I am in charge of the dairy," he said. The superintendent was away on his vacation. "We are milking thirty cows and making certified milk"—milk that I learned later went to the sick babies at Norfolk.

"How does the inspector rate your milk?"

"We are getting ninety-six and ninety-eight per cent," he said, and seemed rather dissatisfied. "I am trying to make it one hundred, but I haven't done it yet," he added in his slow, dogged way.

He took me over the dairy. Every thing was scrupulously clean. The cattle looked fine. He knew every one, her pedigree, her peculiarities, her capacity, just what she ate, and what ration was required to produce the best results.



Hampton Sketches

A Man to Men

E. L. Chichester

The Institute Press
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THIS SKETCH HAS APPEARED
IN THE "ALBANY JOURNAL"
AND IN "HOSPITAL TOPICS"
OF BUFFALO

A MAN TO MEN

VERMONT has a prison at Rutland where the prisoners, for the most part, are young men, sentenced for comparatively short terms.

One day last summer the office routine was interrupted by a telephone call announcing that representatives of Hampton Institute, Va., were unexpectedly detained at the station, and asking if they might visit the prison. The management was most cordial. "Certainly." Representatives from Hampton meant plantation songs.

In due time the party arrived. It consisted of one of the instructors (a white man), a Negro disciplinarian, an Indian student, and four colored singers.

They were taken through the prison and witnessed the sight of men doing enforced work with averted faces, felt the pull on their sympathies that always accompanies such an inspection, and then adjourned to the assembly hall of the prison, where they were given seats on the platform.

The straight-backed wooden benches were filled with the prisoners, and the guards, holding their guns across their knees, sat in chairs in the aisle, grim-faced and alert. In the rear were assembled a number of guests, friends of the warden, some ladies, who perhaps were teachers in the prison Sunday school, and a few neighbors who had heard of the unexpected visit and had been allowed to come in for the entertainment. After the quartet sang there was a pause.

"You must make the speech here," whispered the instructor to the black man at his side. "I can't," said the other, startled. "Yes you can. You are our disciplinarian. You are in control of men. Speak to them."

"I shall surely start by telling them I am glad to see so many of them here," pleaded the other. "Nonsense," and before he could further object he was introduced and standing in the middle of the platform.

This man was very big and black, a pure-blood Negro, not a ready speaker, but he was a man who had had his share of handicap in the battle of life and won out, while the men before him were suf-

fering different degrees of defeat. He hesitated, then he began with a story of a Negro preacher who had forgotten his text and was gayed by a fellow in the gallery who had had too much "co'n juice." The faces of his audience were a study. The men appreciated the situation he described perfectly. He then went on to tell another. This was about a fellow sent up for stealing chickens and discharged in time to attend a revival meeting, and answer the sister whose testimony was in the form of a criticism of the absent one. The men fairly doubled up with laughter and the lips of the guards twitched. Some of the visitors looked as if they hardly knew how to take the speech. What was he driving at anyway?

Embarassed and uncertain as he had begun, he had established a bond of sympathy between the sad-faced company and himself, and now he began to talk to them about looking their fellow-men in the face; about meeting the adverse experiences of life unafraid; and closed with an appeal to their courage and manhood that had in it the ring of sincerity.

The Negro, the member of a struggling race whose road to success is beset by weaknesses inherent in itself, and opposed by prejudices and powers without, that would be daunt the strongest ambition, talked simply and earnestly concerning the equipment needed by a man who faces odds.

When he had finished there wasn't much time left. The party must catch the train, but when the warden explained that the prisoners were allowed to show their appreciation of anything to which they had listened by rising, every man sprang to his feet with the alacrity of a jack-in-the-box ; and the last glimpse of the assembly so strangely garbed in its uniform of disgrace, showed a body of human faces lighted with hope.



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The Woodman

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IN THE 'SOUTHERN WORKMAN'

THE WOODMAN

BY E. L. CHICHESTER

"The Indian is not a lazy man, but he does need to be provided with proper channels for his energies, and incentives for their use." F. E. Leupp.

THERE are people living in Syracuse who remember Joseph Lion well. He was an Onondaga Indian and worked at the carpenter's trade.

To most white people Joseph seemed commonplace enough. Absorbed, taciturn, and rather gloomy, we can picture him clad in white man's clothes, and work clothes at that, that fitted him in the pitiful, second-hand fashion that the garments of civilization fit the red man. But it would take an eloquent pen indeed to describe the emotions that seethed in his soul. The swarthy, expressionless face masked the memories of a great past in which the man lived his real life.

The Iroquois had possessed and ruled where the people of Syracuse had their homes, and the Onondagas, the council tribe of the Six Nations, had made peace and declared war in their Council House centuries before the Town Hall was thought of.

Joseph, edging through the crowd on his way to his cabin on the reservation, at the close of his day's work, lost himself in these dreams of the past, and when he had shed his hated overalls and dressed in the costume of his people he was another being.

The man was a pagan Indian and smoked his pipe in solemn conclave, or hopped about in the ecstasy of the dance within sound of the bell of the Old Valley Church. All this was barbarous and meaningless to white people when it was not actually sacrilegious, but little did the average Christian missionary of that day appreciate the sound moral principles that found expression in Joseph's guttural speech, or realize that there was a character in the man that commanded the respect of the Indian boys who looked up to him, standing in his buckskin and feathers, from where they squatted on the floor of the Council House.

One of these boys was Joseph's grandson, little Hohs-qua-sa-ga-da, which means, in the Indian language, "the man with the ax on his shoulder," or "the Woodman." In the boy the saddened heart of Joseph found some solace, and he cherished the hope that the solemn

meaning of the dance would be observed by him, and the memories and traditions of the past greatness of his people be kept alive in his person.

He taught the little Woodman from his full store of Indian tradition and ethics, and warned him with gloomy threats against the white man and all his ways; especially, so Joseph told him, was he to shun the printed book, for evil, for the Indian, and evil only, was to be found there.' A devil, he declared, lurked between its covers.

Joseph died among the very last of the old régime, and with him went out, not only his store of memories of a past greatness and power, but most of the reverence that invested the Indian ceremonies, and all that was edifying and inspiring in them.

The Woodman, an orphan, was taken into the family of relatives. They were reservation Indians with all that that implied of ignorance, poverty, and maladjustment to the life and interests of this great and properous country. With children of their own and barely enough to feed them, the outlook for this extra little Indian was a sad one.

He used to sit on his bench against

the wall while the family partook of its meal, and was allowed to approach the table and help himself to anything that was left after the others were through. It makes one's heart ache to think of the hollow-eyed, stoical little fellow, with his empty stomach and timid spirit. People think of Indians as fierce, and forget that they are wild by nature and share the fears of all wild things.

After a season of this life Providence interfered in the Woodman's case in the person of a lady missionary. This woman found a white farmer with a kind wife and a bountiful table, and got the poor, half-starved little Woodman into their home.

There were small girls in the family who were kind to him, and taught him to speak English and something of reading and writing as well. He did not forget his grandfather's teaching. The memory of the grave, earnest face of Joseph Lion commanded his reverence, but the fear of the white man's influence was lessened among these friends, and a curiosity to find and see, with his own eyes, the devil that lurked in the printed book gave a kind of wicked zest to his studies.

After a year or two, through the influence of the same good woman who had found him his home on a farm, the Woodman was sent to Hampton Institute in Virginia. It was supposed that the Government would help him here, but Uncle Sam, who makes an annual appropriation for his red children sent to this school, looked askance at a youth with a Central New York address. No Indian surely could be found in the midst of this civilized Empire State—that is, not one who was Indian enough to draw public moneys—and the fact that the youth in question was the grandson of an Onondaga chief, that his ancestors had never voted, that he made his wants known in the English tongue with difficulty, and that he regarded white people and their ways with ill-concealed fear, weighed not a whit in giving him his standing as a nation's ward.

If he stayed at Hampton he must remain on the footing of the Negro students and earn his own keep while he carried on his studies. It was hard, but it was this or return to the hardships and uncertainties of life on the reservation, so he entered on his work

year, a year with long hours and steady toil, with much of the spirit of a galley slave.

How impossible it is for a white man to understand the contempt with which an old-time Indian regards work! For a free man to voluntarily devote his waking hours to toil is quite beyond the Indian's power to conceive. This attitude toward work was bred in the Woodman's bone, but Hampton holds the secret of joy in toil, if it is held anywhere, and the Woodman, now grown to be a tall youth in his early twenties, actually came to like the life with its long hours and constantly stimulated pride in accomplishment. He came to perceive, with more and more distinctness, what it was that interested the white man in his, to the Indian, singular manner of life. He chose the machinist's trade and in three years gained a degree of skill that enabled him to find work outside. Then he went back to the neighborhood of his home and entered a railroad shop, where he built locomotives.

Picture him at this time—tall, silent, and pre-occupied, but with a smile that lighted his whole face and won the interest and sympathy of the veriest

stranger. He had marked Indian features and eyes that, like his grandfather's, seemed to see things beyond the task in hand, but this, in the Woodman's case, was only seeming; for though he remembered the traditions of the reservation, and his own childhood experiences and impressions in the Council House, these were but dim memories, and the demands of his trade and the friends and interests of the active life he was living, satisfied him.

The Woodman, in his thoughts and pursuits, had become a white man; but back of it all was race consciousness; and the school that had trained him had impressed him with a sense of a peculiar responsibility to his people. This showed in an interesting way after he had been for some time in the shop. The men proposed his name as a member of their Union. He thought the matter over with care and finally consented to join *as an Indian*. The members demurred, but he was firm, and they took him in on a basis that left the door open to others of his race.

Seventeen years the man followed his trade in this shop; he was not satisfied to do ordinary work, but studied and

practised till his product ranked with the best. Later he would speak of the delight he took in this work, the delight incident to a growing comprehension and the increased respect of his fellow workmen. He had acquired what General Armstrong used to call "the work habit."

Now he went back to Hampton and assisted in the machine shop there. He was again thrown with his people—the Sioux, the Crows, the Navahoes, the Apaches, and the pauperized reservation Indians of the East. He did not classify these people—the Woodman's mind was not at all of this order. He simply liked folks, and fraternized with the children of the red race—his folks curious, suspicious youths—they were playing at the white man's work. The Woodman knew just how they felt. Had he not been there himself? The call of the wild was in their blood. Time—three, four, five years—more time, and still more, was needed to drill hand and mind to the white man's task and give the things that interested him a chance to interest them. How patiently the Woodman worked with them! How well he understood!

Visitors would ask him, with unbelief in their tones, if he could make these fellows work. He fairly beamed as he answered, reminding them of the background of these youths, and assuring them they would all come out well if one only understood and had patience. To meet him in the shop at Hampton was a lesson on the proper attitude of the strong toward the weak, not easily forgotten.

He had land on his reservation and returned, in time, to identify himself with the Indians of his tribe. One after another of the boys here came under his influence and was persuaded to learn a trade. One after another drew out of a condition of dependence and dread, and tasted the freedom and power that come to the man who knows how. The Woodman himself secured a steady job in one of the machine shops in Syracuse. Here you meet him, dressed in his working clothes, and threading his way through the crowds in the street after his day's work, as his grandfather did before him; but whereas poor Joseph Lion dreamed embittered dreams and felt himself the victim of untoward circumstances, his grandson has con-



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quered where he was overcome, and looks forward, where Joseph dwelt on the past.

The Woodman is a Christian but he is not a preacher; that is, he does not talk easily in public. The English language, even, he does not speak as if it were his mother tongue, but he is a doer of the word. Only those in his confidence know with what interest he watches the growth of his brother. How will this Indian brother, whom the Woodman carries on his heart, come out? Shy, taciturn, questioning, he may break on the rocks of the wreck civilized as well as uncivilized man, but he is rescued from the corruption, the dependence, the utter hopelessness of the reservation Indian. He is a living, integral unit of the land which he was born. For better or worse he is one of us.